
ENVIRONMENTAL Fact Sheet



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Responding to a Sludge Spill

Sludge is the solid or semisolid residue resulting from the treatment of wastewater. It contains a variety of microorganisms. Some of these microorganisms may be pathogens (disease-causing organisms), which can survive for a period of time in the sludge. When transporting sludge, it is important to understand that this material can be a potential source of disease, if not handled properly. Transporters are required to obtain a sludge transporter permit from the Department of Environmental Services, maintain records of each load of sludge, and meet all applicable U.S. Department of Transportation and state regulations. Since it is practically impossible to avoid spills altogether, DES has developed the following guidance for responding to and mitigating a spill.

Duty to Report

In the event of an accidental release of sludge, class A or B biosolids, or short paper fiber, the responsible party shall:

1. Immediately take action to contain the spilled material, minimize the environmental impact, and begin clean-up procedures
2. Notify the land owner, local health officer or Board of Health, and DES within 24 hours of the release.

Required Information

The following information must be reported concerning a sludge spill:

1. The date, time, and location of the spill.
2. The volume, in wet tons, of sludge, class A or B biosolids, or short paper fiber spilled and the quantity recovered, in wet tons, including any removed soil.
3. The transporter's permit number, if applicable, and the name and telephone number of the driver involved in the incident.
4. The facility name and telephone number of the generator of the sludge, class A or B biosolids, or short paper fiber.
5. The approximate distance from the spill to any surface waters, wetlands and storm drains.
6. The actions taken to control the extent of the spill, minimize the environmental impact, and to clean up the area.
7. Future actions necessary to clean up the spill, if applicable.

Notification Not Required

Notification to DES shall **not** be required if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The spill is less than 25 gallons or five cubic feet of sludge, class A or B biosolids, or short paper fiber.
2. The spill is immediately contained.
3. The spill is completely removed and properly disposed within 24 hours.
4. There is no impact to groundwater or surface water.

Typical Site Clean Up and Remediation Procedure for Sludge Spills

The person(s) responsible for the spill shall take the following actions:

1. Determine the limits of the spill. If possible, contain the spill by means of barricades or berms of sand or earth. Using powdered lime, spread it over the entire spill area as soon as possible to control odors and mitigate pathogens. Any spill containment devices and structures including berms and fabric shall be installed immediately following the spill and shall remain intact until otherwise directed by DES.
2. Native materials underlying the area of the spill shall be excavated to a depth sufficient to remove spilled and leached materials, as directed by DES.
3. All material removed from a spill site shall be properly disposed and may not be treated and returned to the spill site.
4. Clean material shall be used to replace any material excavated and the site shall be restored as close as possible to its condition prior to the spill, as directed by DES.
5. Previously vegetated areas shall be loamed, re-graded, limed, fertilized and reseeded to restore vegetation.
6. Erosion control netting, or hay, or both, shall be utilized on slopes that are susceptible to erosion.
7. For graveled areas, the gravel shall be excavated and replaced with similar or better quality materials and properly compacted.
8. Smooth, hard surfaces such as asphalt or concrete should be treated with lime or a bleach/water solution (consisting of one part household bleach to nine parts water) after all material is removed from the spill site.

The person(s) responsible for the spill shall document site remediation efforts with a summary report and shall submit a copy of the report to the land owner, the local health officer or board of health, and DES within 30 days of completing the on-site work.

Response to Releases

Any residues resulting from the clean up of spills or leaks must be managed in accordance with the NH Code of Administrative Rules, Chapter Env-Wq 800 Sludge Management. The transporter is considered the generator of the residues and other clean-up waste and must meet the requirements of Env-Wq 800, and any other applicable DES rules.

Costs Associated with Site Clean Up and Testing

All costs associated with the clean up and removal of spilled sludge, biosolids, or short paper fiber, and subsequent remediation efforts, if necessary, shall be borne by the person(s) responsible for the spill. All costs associated with analytical testing required by DES to confirm site clean up and material removal shall be borne by the person(s) responsible for the spill.

Contact Information

The Sludge Management Rules, Env-Wq 800, can be downloaded from the DES website at www.des.nh.gov/Rules/desadmin_list.htm or by calling the DES sludge hauling coordinator at (603) 271-2492.

Disclaimer: Information contained in this fact sheet is current as of July 2007. Policy and regulatory changes occurring after this date may affect part or all of this information. This fact sheet is intended as a basic source of information concerning the clean-up and disinfection of a septage spill; it is not intended to replace the administrative rules contained in Env-Wq Chapter 800. For questions on the status of this information, contact DES at 603-271-2492. This fact sheet provides only recommendations for clean-up personnel to follow; following these steps does not guarantee that all of the sludge, class A or B biosolids, or short paper fiber will be removed from a spill area, nor the removal of all pathogens and viruses.